

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The news conference began at 1 p.m. at the Casa Presidencial. President Flores Perez and some of the reporters spoke in

Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. In his remarks, President Bush referred to TPS, temporary protected status for immigrants.

## Remarks at a Greek Independence Day Celebration March 25, 2002

Your Eminence, I can't spend enough time with you. *[Laughter]* I love your gentle soul, and I love your guidance and your advice. And anytime you want to come back, just give me a call. *[Laughter]* I'm so glad you're here. And I want to thank you all for joining us to celebrate this important day for Greece.

I want to honor the heritage of liberty that both the Greeks and the Americans share. There's no better place to do this than in the White House, the symbol of liberty and the symbol of freedom.

I want to thank the Greek Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs for being here as well. I appreciate you coming. I want to thank the Ambassador—the Greek Ambassador to the United States and the Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the United States as well. You all are welcome here. Thank you for coming. It's great to see you again. I'm glad to see Ambassador George Argyros is here as well. I never thought he'd get through the confirmation process. *[Laughter]* But he is my Ambassador to Spain and is doing a very fine job. I appreciate so much the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, George Tenet, for being here as well.

One hundred and eighty one years ago, our Nation supported the cause of Greek independence. And we have admired the progress Greece has made since. Yet well before we recognized the independence of modern Greece, the Greek heritage had a great impact on American independence. Many of America's founders knew Greek

history better than our own. They drew on Greece's political heritage in framing our Constitution. America's love for liberty has deep roots in the spirit of Greece.

The spirit of liberty has always had enemies. It's important for us to remember our history, that there are some who can't stand liberty and freedom, as we learned so tragically on September the 11th. The terrorists who attack us hate the very idea of human freedom. They cannot stand the thought of freedom of religion. It must make them very nervous to know that a Methodist is standing next to His Eminence—*[laughter]*—in a free society, in a society that welcomes people to worship freely and as they so choose. They hate freedom of speech. They can't stand the thought of people speaking their minds. They hate our system.

They also thought we were weak and soft. And they're wrong, and they're learning it every day. They learned it in Afghanistan, where we went into that country not to seek revenge but to seek justice. And this weekend, little girls went to school for the first time—some little girls went to school for the first time in Afghanistan, showing the world that we didn't go into Afghanistan as conquerors but as liberators.

And they're going to find out how tough we are. Because I want to assure you all that we're going to hunt them down one by one until our homeland is secure, until freedom is secure, to make sure our children and our grandchildren can live in a free and peaceful world.

One ancient Greek statesman put it this way. He said, “We are free to live exactly as we please, yet we are ready to face any danger.” He might as well have been talking about the United States of America. Fortunately, we don’t face danger alone. There are other people who love freedom as well in this world. Greece and America have been firm allies in the great struggles for liberty. Greece was one of only a handful of countries that fought alongside the United States in every major 20th century war. And Americans will always remember Greek heroism and Greek sacrifice for the sake of freedom.

As the 21st century dawns, Greece and America are—once again stand united, this time in the fight against terrorism. Greece is a part of the coalition of nations helping bring justice to those who would harm us, harm the people of Greece, harm anybody who loves freedom. The United States deeply appreciates the role Greece is playing in the war against terror. We thank Greece for access to the military base in Souda Bay, Crete, and for providing a naval frigate for patrolling the Arabian Sea.

And just as Greece has stood side by side with the United States, the United States stands ready to encourage the continued warming of Greek and Turkish relations. We welcome the resumption of diplomatic talks on Cyprus and hope that they will lead to a final settlement that strengthens regional peace and stability.

America and Greece are strong allies, and we’re strategic partners. Our Nation has been inspired by Greek ideals and enriched by Greek immigrants. Today, about one million Americans claim Greek origin. They’ve made a mark in every field. America is better for the one million Americans who live here. In my administration, John Negroponte heads our United Nations, and he’s doing a fine job. And as a part of my war council, the National Security Council, sits George Tenet, whose advice and steady hand have been invaluable to our success.

Today we honor Greek independence and the Greek spirit, a spirit of liberty and a spirit of courage, a spirit that values family and education and public service and faith, a spirit that has helped make America what it is today.

It is my honor to welcome you all here. May God bless Greece, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of America; Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs Yiannis Magriotis of Greece; Greek Ambassador to the U.S. Alexandros Philon; and Cypriot Ambassador to the U.S. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis. The Greek Independence Day proclamation of March 25 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks Announcing the Nominations of Dr. Elias Zerhouni To Be Director of the National Institutes of Health and Dr. Richard Carmona To Be Surgeon General *March 26, 2002*

Well, thank you, Tommy, very much, and welcome to the White House for this historic announcement. I appreciate your leadership, Tommy, in leading this administra-

tion’s strong efforts to improve our Nation’s health care, to make sure that more Americans get affordable health care, better patient protections, that the system puts our